

THE LIFE OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI OF LUCCA

EDITORS' NOTE

In July of 1520 Machiavelli traveled from Florence to nearby Lucca on private business. While there, he composed a brief work on the affairs of Lucca and read in Latin a biography by Niccolò Tegrini on the life of Castruccio Castracani (1281-1328), the town's most illustrious citizen and a medieval condottiere. Machiavelli's interest in writing a biography of Castruccio was more than a passing fancy, for this warrior-prince was one of Florence's cleverest adversaries, and Machiavelli would treat him again in The History of Florence (II, 25-26, 29-30). While the biography gave Machiavelli the opportunity to sharpen his talents as a historian, it nevertheless left his creative imagination unfettered by the demands of the larger work and allowed him to create a biography closer in spirit to literature than to history, the portrait of an archetypal prince akin to Cesare Borgia in The Prince, whose military tactics reflected some of the concepts embodied in The Art of War.

No contemporary reader of this work ever expected precise historical accuracy from it. Instead, the author was supposed to fashion his biographical sketch in such a way that its literary structure would underscore the protagonist's greatness. Thus, when Zanobi Buondelmonti wrote to Machiavelli to thank him for the gift of the work, he praised it highly while at the same time recognizing that the many witty sayings Machiavelli attributed to Castruccio were

taken from other literary works (primarily Diogenes Laertius's Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers). Far from criticizing Machiavelli for including this essentially false information, however, Buondelmonti noted that Machiavelli might have done a better job of making the sayings correspond to his character's otherwise admirable qualities. For Machiavelli's readers, then, the demands of modern historical research were no more compelling than the need to find aesthetically pleasing patterns and politically relevant examples in the text.

The biography first appeared in the 1532 edition of Machiavelli's Prince. For many years thereafter, in both Italian editions and foreign translations, the life of Castruccio was often included with Machiavelli's more famous discussion of the ideal ruler. Men of letters admired its literary qualities, and Henry Fielding was even moved to imitate its structure in one of his novels, Jonathan Wild. Until very recently, however, its importance as a case study of the impact of mercurial Fortune on a great leader's political and military career was often overlooked.

*Written by Niccolò Machiavelli and
Sent to His Very Dear Friends
Zanobi Buondelmonti and Luigi Alamanni*

Those who think about it, my dearest Zanobi and Luigi, are amazed to find that all men, or the majority of them, who have accomplished great deeds in this world, and who have been outstanding among the men of their day, have both in their origins and their birth been humble and obscure, or have been afflicted by Fortune in an extraordinary manner. Because all of them have either been exposed to wild beasts or have had such base parents that, being ashamed of them, they have made themselves sons of Jupiter or some other god. Since many of them are

known to all of us, it would be boring and not very acceptable to my readers to give their names again; therefore, we shall consider their names superfluous and omit them. I believe that Fortune, wishing to demonstrate to the world that it is she, and not Prudence, who makes men great, begins to show her influence at a time when Prudence can have nothing to do in the matter, in order that she may claim credit for everything.

Castruccio Castracani was one of those men; like the others, he had neither a happy nor a renowned birth, as will be clear in the narration of the course of his life. Having discovered in this biography many things that are truly exemplary concerning the power of ingenuity and of Fortune, I thought I should recall it to the memory of men. And I wanted to dedicate it to you, since more than any men I know, you delight in noble deeds.

Let me continue. The Castracani family was numbered among the noble families of Lucca, although at present, being subject to our changing world, it no longer exists. Into this family was born one Antonio, who took Holy Orders, was named canon of St. Michael's Church of Lucca, and was called Messer Antonio as a sign of respect. He had no family other than a sister, whom he married off to Buonaccorso Cennami; but since Buonaccorso died and left her a widow, she decided not to marry again and returned to live with her brother.

Messer Antonio had a vineyard behind the house he lived in which could easily be reached from many directions since it was bordered by many gardens. One morning, just after sunrise, while Madonna Dianora (for that was Messer Antonio's sister's name) was walking through the vineyard while picking certain herbs for seasonings, as is the custom of women, she heard a rustling under a vine in the thicket and, turning her glance there, she heard a weeping sound. She moved toward the noise and uncovered through the foliage the hands and face of a baby boy who seemed to be asking for her help. Half amazed and frightened, but full of compassion and wonder, she took

the child in her arms, brought him home, washed him, wrapped him in the usual white swaddling clothes, and presented him to her brother on his return home. When he had heard the story and had seen the child, Antonio was no less filled with pity and wonder than she; the two of them discussed what course of action they should take and decided to raise the boy themselves, since he was a priest and she had no children. They took a nurse into their home, and the brother and sister brought the baby up as if he were their own son; and when they baptized him, they named him Castruccio in memory of their father.

Castruccio's charm grew with his years, for in everything he showed ability and prudence; and he quickly learned everything Antonio taught him to do. Wanting to make him a priest in order to relinquish to him his canonry and other benefices some day, Messer Antonio trained him accordingly. But he had come upon a mind totally alien to priestly pursuits, for as soon as Castruccio reached the age of fourteen and began to fear Antonio less—and Madonna Dianora not at all—he laid his church books aside and began to occupy himself with weapons; nor did he delight in anything save handling them or in running, jumping, wrestling, and other sports wherein he could show the greatest strength of mind and body, for he far surpassed others of his own age. Whenever he read, nothing pleased him except those accounts of wars or of the deeds of the greatest men. Because of this, Messer Antonio suffered immeasurable unhappiness and distress.

There was, in the city of Lucca, a nobleman of the Guinigi family called Francesco, who far outstripped all the other people of Lucca in wealth, looks, and ingenuity. He was a professional soldier and had long fought under the Visconti of Milan; and because he was a Ghibelline, he was admired above all the others of that faction in Lucca. Since he was in Lucca and met with his fellow citizens morning and evening under the loggia of the Po-

destà, which is at the head of the Piazza di San Michele (the main square of Lucca), he saw Castruccio a number of times in the company of his neighborhood friends playing those games I mentioned above; and since it seemed to Francesco that besides surpassing them all Castruccio had a kingly authority over them, and that they, in certain respects, loved and respected him, he became very anxious to learn who he was. Informed by some bystanders as to Castruccio's identity, he became ever more anxious to have him in his service. And so, one day, after having summoned him, Francesco asked where he would rather be, in the house of a nobleman who would teach him how to ride and bear arms, or in the house of a priest, where he would hear nothing but masses and church services. Messer Francesco realized how happy Castruccio was to hear horses and weapons discussed but observed that the boy was a bit hesitant to speak. When Messer Francesco encouraged him to talk, he replied that if his guardian agreed, nothing could please him more than to leave behind his studies for the priesthood and take up those of a soldier. His reply pleased Francesco very much, and in a few days he arranged things so that Messer Antonio placed Castruccio into his keeping. Messer Antonio was persuaded more by the boy's nature than by anything else, judging that he could not keep him long in his present state.

Castruccio thus passed from the house of Messer Antonio Castracani, the canon, to that of Messer Francesco Guinigi, the condottiere. It is extraordinary to think how in a very short time he acquired all those abilities and habits required of a true gentleman. He first became an excellent horseman, riding even the wildest horse with skill; and in jousts and tournaments, although he was still quite young, he was more outstanding than the others. No matter what the feat of strength or skill was, he found no man to surpass him. To this were added good manners, especially an extremely modest nature; no one ever saw him perform an act or say a word that was displeasing,

and he was respectful to his elders, modest to his equals, and polite to his inferiors. All these things made him loved not only by the entire Guinigi family but by the whole city of Lucca.

At about the time when Castruccio was eighteen years old, the Ghibellines were chased out of Pavia by the Guelfs, and Messer Francesco Guinigi was sent by the Visconti of Milan to help them. With him went Castruccio, who was put in charge of the whole company. Throughout this expedition Castruccio gave so many indications of his prudence and his courage that no one who took part in the campaign made as much of a reputation as he did; and his name became great and honored not only in Pavia but in all of Lombardy.

Returning to Lucca much more respected than when he had left, Castruccio never missed the chance to make friends, using every means necessary for gaining the friendship of men. But Messer Francesco Guinigi died, leaving behind him a son of thirteen named Pagolo. Francesco made Castruccio tutor and guardian of his property. Summoning him before his death, he begged him to raise his own son with the same devotion with which Castruccio himself had been raised, and to return to his son whatever gratitude he had not yet been able to render to the father. After Guinigi's death and Castruccio's guardianship of Pagolo, Castruccio grew so much in reputation and in power that the goodwill he enjoyed in Lucca began to turn to envy—so much so that many slandered him and considered him a suspicious man with the heart of a tyrant. Chief among these was the head of the Guelf faction, Messer Giorgio degli Opizi. Hoping to become ruler of Lucca after Francesco's demise, he came to feel that Castruccio, who had gained control because of his merits, had stolen his opportunity; and because of this he spread rumors to put Castruccio in a bad light. At first Castruccio was only put off by this, but soon he became apprehensive, for he believed that Messer Giorgio would not rest until he had brought him into disfavor with the

lieutenant of King Robert of Naples, who might have him thrown out of Lucca.

At that time, Uguccione della Faggiuola d'Arezzo was lord of Pisa, first having been elected captain by the people and later having made himself ruler. With Uguccione were some Luccan exiles of the Ghibelline faction with whom Castruccio plotted in order to reinstate them with Uguccione's assistance; he also made his scheme known to his friends inside the city, who could no longer stand the power of the Opizi. Having told them what they should do, Castruccio cautiously fortified the Onesti tower and filled it with munitions and abundant provisions in order to be able, if necessary, to hold out there for several days. During the night that he and Uguccione had decided upon, he gave the signal to Uguccione, who had come down with many men onto the plain between Lucca and the mountains; and when he saw the sign, Uguccione advanced on St. Peter's Gate and set the entrance ablaze. At the same time Castruccio called the people to arms by a prearranged signal and forced the gate from the inside, so that when Uguccione and his troops had entered, they occupied the area, killed Messer Giorgio together with his entire family and many of his friends and supporters, and drove out the governor. Uguccione reorganized the city's government as he pleased, damaging it in the sense that, as the figures show, more than one hundred families were banished from Lucca. Of those who fled, some went to Florence while others went to Pistoia, both cities held by the Guelf faction and consequently eventually to become enemies of Uguccione and the people of Lucca.

Since the Florentines and the other Guelfs felt that the Ghibelline party had seized too much power in Tuscany, they agreed to restore the exiles from Lucca. Organizing a huge army, they entered the Nievole Valley and occupied the city of Montecatini; from there they set up camp at Montecarlo in order to have a clear passage to Lucca. Meanwhile, Uguccione assembled a goodly number of Pisans, Luccans, and, in addition, a large number of Ger-

man mounted troops that he had brought with him from Lombardy, and he moved toward the Florentine camps. Hearing that the enemy was drawing near, the Florentine troops left Montecarlo and placed themselves between Montecatini and Pescia; Ugucione set up his troops below Montecarlo, two miles away from the enemy. For several days there were only some light skirmishes between the cavalry of both armies, for Ugucione had taken ill and the Pisans and the Luccans were avoiding a pitched battle.

But his illness grew more serious, and Ugucione withdrew to Montecarlo for treatment, leaving Castruccio in charge of the army. This caused the downfall of the Guelfs, for they took heart, thinking that the enemy army was without a leader. Castruccio knew this and waited several days to reinforce their belief, pretending to be afraid and not letting anyone leave the fortifications. The Guelfs, on their side, became more arrogant as they observed this fear, and each day they presented themselves drawn up in battle formation before Castruccio's army. When Castruccio believed that he had fostered in them enough courage and had learned their battle order, he decided to fight. First he made a speech to encourage his own soldiers and showed them that victory was assured if they were willing to follow his commands.

Castruccio had noticed how the enemy had placed its strongest forces in the center ranks and its weaker men on the flanks; he consequently did the opposite, putting his bravest men on his flanks and his weakest men in the middle. He left camp with this plan of battle, and when he came within sight of the enemy army, which had, as it usually did, moved up insolently to offer battle, he ordered that the middle ranks advance slowly while the units on the flanks charge ahead. In this manner, when the battle was joined only the flanks of the two armies fought while the center remained stationary, since Castruccio's center had stayed so far behind that those of the enemy's center did not make contact. Thus, Castruccio's

best men fought the weakest troops of the enemy, and their best soldiers stood still without being able either to harm the enemy facing them or to give aid to their comrades. Both flanks of the enemy were, without difficulty, put to flight; those in the center, seeing themselves exposed on their flanks, fled without having had the opportunity to show their bravery. The rout and the slaughter were great, for there were more than ten thousand men killed; among them were many leaders and great knights of the Gueft party from all over Tuscany, as well as many princes who had come to help them, including Piero, the brother of King Robert, Carlo, his nephew, and Filippo, ruler of Taranto. Castruccio's losses did not reach three hundred; among these was that of Francesco, Uguccione's son, a valiant young man who was killed during the first charge.

This rout made Castruccio's name truly great—to such an extent that Uguccione became so jealous and suspicious of his position that he could think of nothing but how to eliminate him, believing that he had lost power, and not gained it, by this victory. While he thought in these terms and waited for an honest opportunity to bring it about, it happened that Pier Agnolo Micheli, a man of worth and of great esteem, was killed in Lucca. His murderer sought refuge in Castruccio's home. When the police came to arrest him, they were repulsed by Castruccio; as a result, the murderer saved himself. Hearing this, Uguccione, who was then in Pisa, felt that he now had a good reason to punish him. Calling his son, Neri, to whom he had given the rule of Lucca, he ordered him to arrest and execute Castruccio under the pretense of inviting him to a banquet. Castruccio therefore went to the ruler's palace without fearing any harm; he was first detained for supper by Neri and then arrested. But Neri, fearing that the people might revolt if he executed him without any good reason, kept him alive in order that Uguccione might give him more detailed instructions. The latter, cursing the slowness and cowardice of his son,

left Pisa for Lucca with four hundred horsemen to finish the matter. He had gone no farther than Bagni when the Pisans revolted, killed Uguccione's lieutenant and the other members of his family who had stayed behind in Pisa, and proclaimed Count Gaddo della Gherardesca as their ruler. Uguccione heard about what had happened in Pisa before reaching Lucca, but he thought it unwise to return since the Luccans might close the gates of the city on him, following the example of the Pisans. But the people of Lucca, having heard about the news from Pisa, found the means to liberate Castruccio in spite of the fact that Uguccione had come to Lucca. They first began to speak disrespectfully in groups around the public squares, then to make noise, and finally to take up arms, demanding that Castruccio be released. Uguccione was so afraid that he released him from prison. Whereupon Castruccio immediately joined his supporters and, with the aid of the people, attacked Uguccione. When he saw that he had no alternative, Uguccione fled with his friends and went to Lombardy to serve the Della Scala family, where he died in poverty.

From the status of a prisoner Castruccio became, in all but name, prince of Lucca, and with the aid of his friends and the recent favor of the people he managed to be named captain of their army for a year. Having obtained this, in order to establish his reputation as a soldier, he planned to regain for Lucca many of the territories that had rebelled after Uguccione's departure. So he marched, with the support of his Pisan allies, against Serezana. In order to conquer it, he built a fort above it—which has since been surrounded by a wall by the Florentines, who today call it Serezanello—and in two months he captured the town. Then, with this under his belt, he took Massa, Carrara, and Lavenza, and in a short time he had occupied all of Lunigiana. To block the pass between Lombardy and Lunigiana, he captured Pontremoli and exiled its ruler, Messer Anastagio Palavisini. Returning to Lucca after this victory, he was met by the entire population.

Castruccio concluded that he should no longer put off making himself prince; with the aid of Pazzino dal Pogio, Puccinello dal Portico, Francesco Boccansacchi, and Cecco Guinigi—men of great reputation in Lucca who were bribed by him—he became lord and was declared prince by a solemn decree of the people.

At that time, Federigo of Bavaria, king of the Romans, had come into Italy to take the crown of the empire. Castruccio became his friend and went to meet him with five hundred horsemen, leaving Pagolo Guinigi behind in Lucca as his deputy; because of the memory of his father, Castruccio treated him as if he were his own son. Castruccio was received honorably by Federigo, was granted many privileges, and was made his lieutenant in Tuscany. Because the Pisans had driven out Gaddo della Gherardesca, having turned to Federigo for aid out of fear of him, Federigo made Castruccio lord of Pisa. The Pisans accepted his rule because of their fear of the Guelfs, especially the Florentines.

When Federigo returned to Germany, after leaving a governor in Rome, all of the Lombard and Tuscan Ghibellines who belonged to the emperor's camp turned to Castruccio, and each promised him sovereignty over their states if he would assist them to return there. Among these were Matteo Guidi, Nardo Scolari, Lapo Uberti, Gerozzo Nardi, and Piero Buonaccorsi—all Ghibellines and all Florentine exiles. Using their support and his own strength, Castruccio was planning to make himself ruler of all Tuscany. In order to increase his prestige, he made an alliance with Messer Matteo Visconti, Prince of Milan, and called the entire city and the surrounding countryside to arms. Since Lucca had five gates, he divided the territory into five parts and armed each, giving them commanders and banners, so that at short notice he could bring together twenty thousand men, not counting those who could aid him from Pisa. When Castruccio had surrounded himself with these forces and allies, it happened that Messer Matteo Visconti was attacked by the Guelfs

of Piacenza, who had exiled the Ghibellines with the support of the Florentines and of King Robert. Matteo therefore asked Castruccio to attack the Florentines so that they might recall their forces from Lombardy. And so Castruccio attacked the Arno Valley and occupied Fucecchio and San Miniato, doing great damage to the countryside; whereupon the Florentines were forced to recall their troops. No sooner had they come back into Tuscany than Castruccio was himself forced to turn back to Lucca.

The Poggio family in that city was powerful, not only because it had supported Castruccio but also because it had made him ruler. Thinking that it had not been rewarded according to its merits, the family conspired with other families of Lucca to foment rebellion and to drive Castruccio out of the city. Taking advantage of an opportunity one morning, they assaulted Castruccio's lieutenant in charge of justice and killed him. They wanted to go on to incite the populace to revolt, but Stefano di Poggio, a peace-loving old man who had taken no part in the conspiracy, came forward and by means of his authority compelled his family to lay down their arms, offering himself as a mediator between them and Castruccio in order to obtain their goals. And so they abandoned their arms with no more caution than when they had taken them up; meanwhile, hearing the news from Lucca, Castruccio left Pagolo Guinigi in charge of the main army and, without losing any time, came to Lucca with part of his forces. Finding the disturbance under control, contrary to his fears, and thinking that he could easily make himself secure there, he placed his armed supporters in all the strategic positions. Stefano di Poggio, believing that Castruccio was under an obligation to him, went to find him and begged him on behalf of his family (but not on his own account, thinking that he needed no such mercy) to make allowances for youth and to remember the old friendship and the obligation owed to their family. To this Castruccio replied graciously and told him

not to worry, saying that he was happier to see the disturbances quelled than he was angry over their beginning; and he asked Stefano to bring them all to him, saying that he thanked God for the opportunity to demonstrate his clemency and goodwill. When they had all come forward, trusting in the word of both Stefano and Castruccio, they were imprisoned and, together with Stefano, executed.

The Florentines had meanwhile recovered San Miniato. Castruccio felt that he should put an end to this war, for until he could be sure of Lucca he could not leave home. Tempting the Florentines with a truce, he found them eager to agree, for they were worn out and anxious to put an end to their expenditures. A two-year truce was signed, and each side kept what it held. When Castruccio was rid of the war, in order not to run the risks he had incurred before, he used various pretexts and excuses to eliminate all those in Lucca who might aspire to his position. Nor did he forgive anyone, stripping them of their citizenship, their property, and for those whom he could lay his hands on, of their lives, saying that he had learned by experience not to trust any of them. Furthermore, to increase his security he built a fortress in Lucca, using the materials from the towers of those he had exiled or murdered.

While Castruccio had halted his war with the Florentines and was fortifying himself in Lucca, he did not cease doing those things that would increase his greatness without war. Having a great desire to occupy Pistoia, since he felt he might have a foothold in Florence in holding that town, in various ways he gained the friendship of the whole mountain area and conducted himself in such a manner that all of the Pistoian factions trusted him. The city was split in those days, as always, between the Whites and the Blacks. The leader of the Whites was Bastiano di Possente; that of the Blacks, Iacopo da Gia. Each had secret communications with Castruccio, and each wanted to exile the other to such an extent that, finally, after much mutual suspicion, they came to blows. Iacopo fortified the

Florentine gate and Bastiano the Luccan gate. Relying more upon Castruccio than upon the Florentines, since they both judged him quicker in matters of war, each secretly asked him for help. Castruccio promised aid to both, telling Iacopo that he would come in person and Bastiano that he would send his protégé, Pagolo Guinigi. Giving each of them a meeting time, he sent Pagolo by way of Pescia while he came directly to Pistoia; by midnight, as Castruccio and Pagolo had planned, both were in Pistoia, each being received as a friend. Once inside the city, Castruccio gave a signal to Pagolo when he thought the time was right, after which one killed Iacopo da Gia and the other murdered Bastiano di Possente; all their partisans were either captured or executed. Pistoia fell to them without further opposition. Having thrown the Signoria out of the palace, Castruccio forced the people to render obedience to him, cancelling many old debts and making many promises. And he did the same thing in the surrounding countryside, a large part of which had run to see the new prince, so that everyone, filled with hope and moved, in large measure, by Castruccio's abilities, settled down.

At that time the Roman people began to riot because of the high cost of living, blaming this condition on the absence of the Pope, then living in Avignon, and cursing the German authorities. As a result, daily murders and other disorders occurred. Enrico, the emperor's lieutenant, could do nothing about it. This caused Enrico to suspect that the Romans might call in King Robert of Naples, chase him out of Rome, and return the city to the Pope. Having no closer friend to whom he could turn than Castruccio, he sent him a message asking him not only to send help but to come in person to Rome. Castruccio judged that he could not ignore the request if he wanted to render a service to the emperor; furthermore, since the emperor was not in Rome, he could see no other course of action. Leaving Pagolo Guinigi in Lucca, he set out for Rome with six hundred mounted men, where he was re-

ceived by Enrico with the greatest honors. In a very short time his presence gave the emperor's party so much prestige that, without bloodshed or violence, he restored order. Castruccio removed the cause of the disturbances, since he had a great deal of grain brought in by sea from the Pisan area. Afterward, partly by means of threats and partly by punishing the Roman leaders, he returned the people willingly to the rule of Enrico. Castruccio was named a senator of Rome and was given many other honors by the Roman people. Castruccio assumed this office with the greatest of ceremony and wore a brocaded toga bearing an inscription in front that read, "He is the man God wills," and another in the back that read, "He shall be what God wills."

Meanwhile, the Florentines, angry that Castruccio used the truce to take control of Pistoia, were scheming about how to make the city rebel—something they thought would be an easy matter because of his absence. Among the Pistoian exiles in Florence were Baldo Cecchi and Iacopo Baldini, both men of authority and ready to risk everything. These men had secret contacts with their friends inside Pistoia. With the aid of the Florentines, they entered Pistoia by night and drove out Castruccio's supporters and officials, killing some of them and restoring the city to its former liberty. This greatly annoyed and displeased Castruccio. Taking leave of Enrico, he returned to Lucca by forced marches with his troops. When they heard of his return, the Florentines, believing that he would not stand idle, decided to anticipate him and to enter the Nievole Valley first with their troops, thinking that if they occupied the valley they would cut off the road needed to reoccupy Pistoia. They raised a large army composed of all the Guelf sympathizers and entered Pistoian territory. At the same time, Castruccio arrived with his troops at Montecarlo. When he had learned where the Florentine army was located, he decided neither to meet it in the plain of Pistoia nor to wait for it in the plain of Pescia, but rather to confront it in the Serravalle Pass if that

were possible. He believed that if this plan worked, his victory would be assured, since he had learned that the Florentines had thirty thousand men while he had chosen twelve thousand of his own. And although he had faith in their ability and industry, he was nevertheless afraid of being surrounded by a superior force in a battle joined in an open space.

Serravalle is a fort between Pescia and Pistoia, set on a hill that closes the Nievole Valley, not exactly on the pass itself but about two bowshots above it. The passage through it is narrow rather than steep, since it slopes up gently on both sides; but it is so narrow that twenty men standing side by side would span it, especially where the waters divide on the hill. This was the spot where Castruccio meant to face the enemy, both because his smaller forces would have an advantage and because his men would only see the enemy the minute the battle started; for Castruccio feared that his troops might be frightened if they saw ahead of time how great the size of the enemy was. Messer Manfredi, of German descent, was the keeper of the castle; he had been placed in charge of the town as a common ground for both Lucca and Pistoia before Castruccio took Pistoia. Neither city had reason to attack him, since he had promised to remain neutral and to have no obligations to anyone; because of this, and because of his strong position, he had remained in power. But in view of these new circumstances, Castruccio grew anxious to occupy the stronghold. Being very friendly with a certain citizen there, he arranged with him to have four hundred of his men let in to kill the ruler the night before the battle was to begin.

Once things were organized in this manner, he did not move the army from Montecarlo in order to encourage the Florentines to enter the pass. Since the latter wished to shift the fighting from Pistoia to the Nievole Valley, they camped below Serravalle, intending to cross the hill the next day. But, having taken the castle that evening without a sound, Castruccio left Montecarlo at midnight

and arrived in silence with his troops at the foot of Serravalle in the morning. And so, at the same time, each on his own side, both he and the Florentines began to climb the slope. Castruccio had sent his foot soldiers along the main road and a band of four hundred cavalry toward the castle on the left. The Florentines, on the other side, had sent ahead four hundred horsemen; they had moved their infantry, stationing their men-at-arms behind them. They did not expect to find Castruccio on the hill, since they did not know that he had taken the castle. So the Florentine cavalry, having climbed the slope, came upon Castruccio's foot soldiers unexpectedly, and they found themselves so close to their enemy that they hardly had time to lace their helmets. Since, therefore, the unprepared were assaulted by the prepared and well organized, Castruccio's troops attacked valiantly and their opponents could hardly resist. Nevertheless, some fought back, and by the time the noise reached the rest of the Florentine camp everything was confused: the horsemen were hemmed in by the infantry; the infantry by the horsemen and the wagons; the commanders could neither go forward nor backward because of the narrowness of the place; the result was that no one knew what they could or should do in all this confusion. In the meantime, the Florentine cavalymen, fighting the enemy infantry, were killed and slaughtered without being able to defend themselves because of the difficulty of the terrain; nevertheless, they resisted more out of tenacity than ability, for they had the mountains on their flanks, their friends behind them, and the enemy in front of them, which left them no means of escape.

Meanwhile, Castruccio, seeing that he did not have enough men to rout the enemy, sent a thousand foot soldiers through the castle; having them descend together with four hundred horsemen that he had sent ahead, they hit the enemy on their flanks with such fury that the Florentine soldiers, unable to withstand the impetus of the charge, fled, defeated more by the terrain than by the

enemy. The rout began with those who were in the rear, toward Pistoia; they spread out over the plain, each saving his own neck as best he could.

This was a great and bloody rout. Many leaders were captured, among them Bandino de' Rossi, Francesco Brunelleschi, and Giovanni della Tosa—all Florentine noblemen. Also soldiering with the Florentines were many other Tuscans and Neapolitans who had been sent by King Robert to aid the Guelfs.

As soon as the Pistoians heard about the defeat, they drove out the Guelf party without delay and gave themselves up to Castruccio. Not content with this, Castruccio occupied Prato and all the strongholds of the plain on both sides of the Arno River; he camped with his forces in the Peretola Plain, two miles from Florence. There he stayed for many days, dividing up the booty and celebrating his victory; he had money coined and he organized races to be run by horses, men, and whores in order to insult the Florentines. Nor did he miss the chance to bribe some noble citizens in order to have the gates of Florence opened at night; but the plot was discovered, and Tommaso Lupacci and Lambertuccio Frescobaldi were captured and beheaded.

Terrified by their defeat, the Florentines now saw no way to save their freedom. In order to be more certain of his aid, they sent ambassadors to King Robert of Naples announcing that the city and control over it were his. The king accepted, not so much because of the honor shown him by the Florentines but rather because he knew how important it was for his own state that the Guelfs control Tuscany. Agreeing with the Florentines that they should pay him two hundred thousand ducats annually, he sent his son, Carlo, to Florence with four thousand horsemen.

Meanwhile, the Florentines were relieved somewhat of Castruccio's men, since he was obliged to leave their territory and to go to Pisa to repress a conspiracy organized against him by Benedetto Lanfranchi, one of the city's first citizens. Unable to bear the fact that his city was in

servitude to a Luccan, Benedetto plotted against him, planning to occupy the citadel and to kill Castruccio's supporters after driving out the garrison. But since, in these matters, a group small enough to keep the secret is not large enough to execute the design, while Benedetto was searching for more conspirators he found one who revealed the plan to Castruccio. Also incriminated by this disclosure were Bonifacio Cerchi and Giovanni Guidi, two Florentines who were exiled in Pisa. Whereupon Castruccio had Benedetto seized and killed; the rest of his family was banished, and many other noble citizens were beheaded. And since it appeared that Pistoia and Pisa were somewhat disloyal to him, he tried to secure them by means of diligence and force. This gave the Florentines enough time to regroup their troops and to await the arrival of Carlo. When he arrived, they decided not to waste any time and gathered together a vast group, calling to their assistance almost all the Guefts of Italy; they made up a huge army of more than thirty thousand infantry and ten thousand horse. After discussing where they should attack first, Pistoia or Pisa, they resolved to strike first at Pisa—this seemed the plan most likely to succeed because of the recent conspiracy there, and it seemed more profitable since they thought that Pistoia would surrender automatically once Pisa fell.

The Florentines therefore left the city with this army on the first of May, 1328, immediately occupied La Lastra, Signa, Montelupo, and Empoli, and arrived with their army at San Miniato. Castruccio was not at all afraid when he heard about the huge army the Florentines had fielded against him, for he believed that this was the moment for Fortune to put the rule of Tuscany within his grasp; he felt that the enemy would not make a better showing at Pisa than they had at Serravalle, and that they had no hopes of regrouping themselves as they had done previously. Having gathered together twenty thousand of his foot soldiers and four thousand cavalrymen, he camped at Fucecchio and sent Pagolo Guinigi with five

thousand lancers to Pisa. Fucecchio is situated on a stronger site than any other castle in the area of Pisa, being in between the Gusciana Canal and the Arno River and somewhat above the plain. Once there, the enemy could not prevent the arrival of supplies from either Lucca or Pisa unless they divided their forces; nor could they march to meet him or go toward Pisa without a positive disadvantage: in the first case they could be trapped between Castruccio and the men from Pisa, and in the second they would have to cross the Arno; with the enemy on their backs, this would be very dangerous. In order to encourage them to cross the river, Castruccio did not place his troops along the Arno's banks but rather along Fucecchio's walls, leaving plenty of room between the river and himself.

After occupying San Miniato, the Florentines debated their next move: whether to go on to Pisa or meet Castruccio. Having considered the difficulties of each alternative, they decided to engage his forces in battle. The Arno was low enough so that it could be forded, but only in such a way that the infantry would be up to their shoulders in water and the horsemen up to their saddles. On the morning of the tenth of June, the Florentines began to cross, in battle formation, part of their cavalry and a battalion of ten thousand infantry. Castruccio was ready. Intent on finishing what he had in mind, he attacked them with a battalion of five thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry; not allowing them time to leave the water, he fell upon them suddenly. He also dispatched a thousand light infantry downstream and upstream. The Florentine foot soldiers were weighted down by their arms and the water and had not yet climbed up the opposite bank. Although a few made it across, the horsemen made the way more difficult for others to cross, having broken up the river bottom. Thus, finding the passageway so uneven, many horses turned over on their riders and others got so stuck in the mud that they could not retreat. When the Florentine commanders saw the difficulty of

crossing in that spot, they made their men withdraw and go higher up the river in order to find a fresh place with a more suitable riverbank. Those troops that Castruccio had sent up the river opposed this move; these soldiers were lightly armed with round shields and spears and struck the enemy in the face and the chest while screaming loudly. So frightened were the horses by these cries and by their wounds that, unwilling to go on, they fell back upon each other. The struggle between Castruccio's men and those who did cross was bitter and terrible; many fell on each side and each tried with all its might to overcome the other. Castruccio's troops wanted to throw their opponents into the river, while the Florentines wanted to push his men back to make room for those who were leaving the water to fight. To this tenacity were added the exhortations of the officers. Castruccio reminded his men that these were the same enemy troops that they had defeated not long ago at Serravalle; the Florentines, on the other hand, reproached their men for allowing themselves to be defeated by so few opponents. Seeing that the battle was wearing on, that both his men and their adversaries were already worn out, and that there were many dead and wounded on each side, Castruccio sent forward another troop of five thousand foot soldiers; after leading them behind those who were fighting, he ordered the ones in front to separate, one part turning to the right, the other to the left, as if they were in retreat. This strategy gave the Florentines room to move ahead and to gain some ground, but when their tired troops came into contact with Castruccio's fresh men, it did not take long for the latter to push the former back into the river. So far, the cavalry on either side had no advantage; knowing his own to be inferior, Castruccio had merely ordered his cavalry officers to hold the enemy. He hoped to beat their foot soldiers; once that was accomplished, he could more easily destroy their horsemen. Everything went according to plan, for when he saw that

the enemy foot soldiers had retreated into the river he sent the rest of his infantry against the enemy cavalry; the foot soldiers wounded the enemy with darts and lances, and since his own horsemen were pressing against them with even greater force, they were put to flight. The Florentine commanders, realizing the difficulties their horsemen were having in getting across, tried to cross their infantry downstream in order to attack Castruccio's flanks. But since the banks were steep and were held by Castruccio's men, they tried in vain. Thus the enemy was routed, to Castruccio's great honor and glory, and of the entire force not more than a third survived. Many of their leaders were captured; Carlo, King Robert's son, together with Michelagnolo Falconi and Taddeo degli Albizzi, who were Florentine commissioners, fled to Empoli. The booty was sizable and the slaughter was very heavy, as one might imagine to be the case in such a battle: within the Florentine army, 20,231 perished, while Castruccio's forces lost 1,570.

But Fortune, hostile to his glory, took life away from him instead of giving it to him—it interrupted those plans that Castruccio had intended to carry out for a long time, plans that only death could have prevented him from carrying out. All during that day of battle Castruccio struggled hard; then, when it ended, all tired and drenched with sweat, he stopped at the gate of Fucecchio to review his troops, to thank and receive them personally, as well as to be ready to deal with any enemy force that might pose a threat. He thought it was the duty of a good general to be the first to mount his horse and the last to dismount. Thus, while standing exposed to a wind—an almost always unhealthy one that usually rises up from the Arno at noon—he caught an icy chill; he paid no attention to it, for he was used to such discomforts, but it was the cause of his death. The following night he was struck by a very strong fever and his temperature continued to rise; all the doctors considered the illness fatal, and

when Castruccio learned this, he called Pagolo Guinigi and spoke these words to him:

“If I had known, my son, that Fortune had wanted to cut me down in the middle of that journey’s path leading to the glory which I, through my many successful deeds, had promised myself to attain, I would have toiled less and left you fewer enemies and less envy, though a smaller state. I would have been happy to rule Lucca and Pisa and I would not have taken the Pistoians and angered the Florentines with so many injuries; rather, making each of these two peoples my allies, I would have led a quieter, if not longer, life and would have left you, without a doubt, a more stable and secure state, although a smaller one. But Fortune, who wishes to be the arbiter of all human affairs, did not grant me sufficient judgment early enough to understand her, nor enough time to be able to overcome her. You have heard—since many have told you and I have never denied it—how I entered your father’s service while still young, lacking all those aspirations that should attract every noble mind, and how I was raised and loved by your father more than if I had been of his own blood. As a result, under his guidance, I became valorous and able to obtain that fortune that you yourself have observed. And since, at the point of death, he entrusted you and your property to my care, I have raised you with this same love and have increased your inheritance with the same faith that bound and still binds me. And since not only was what your father left you yours, but also what Fortune and my ability have earned, I decided not to marry so that love for my sons would not prevent me in any way from showing such gratitude toward your father’s family as I felt obliged to show. I am leaving you, therefore, a large state, and this pleases me; but because I leave it to you in a weak, unstable condition, I am very unhappy. You control the city of Lucca, which will never be content under your rule; you rule Pisa, where the citizens are by nature treacherous and

fickle, and which, however used to being dominated it has been at times, will never tolerate a Luccan as its lord. Pistoia is still yours, but it is somewhat untrustworthy because of internal divisions and it remains angry at our family because of recent injuries. Nearby, you have the offended Florentines, harmed by us in a thousand ways but not destroyed, to whom the news of my death will be more pleasing than the conquest of all Tuscany. You cannot count on the emperor or the princes of Milan because they are far away, lazy, and their aid comes late. Therefore, you should trust only in your own energy, in the memory of my ability, and in the reputation you will gain from this present victory. If you know how to use this reputation with prudence, it will help you reach a truce with the Florentines, who, being terrified by this present rout, should willingly consent. As for them, while I sought to make them my enemies and thought that their enmity would bring me power and glory, you must try to make them your friends at all costs, because their friendship will bring you security and comfort. It is very important in this world to know oneself and to know how to measure the strength of one's mind and one's condition, and anyone who is not suited to deeds of war ought to try to reign with the arts of peace. My advice to you is to turn to these arts and strive, by this means, to enjoy the fruits of my labors and dangers; you should manage easily if you take my maxims to be true. And you will be obligated to me in two ways: first, because I left you this realm, and second, because I taught you how to keep it."

Having summoned those citizens of Lucca, Pisa, and Pistoia who had served under him, and having commended Pagolo Guinigi to them, making them swear obedience to him, he died, leaving happy memories of himself with all those who knew of him and with all those who were his friends, and he left as much regret behind as did any prince who had died at any other time. His funeral was celebrated with the most solemn rites, and he

was buried in San Francesco of Lucca. But Fortune and ability were not as kind to Pagolo Guinigi as they had been to Castruccio, for not much later he lost Pistoia and then Pisa; he held Lucca, but only with difficulty, and it remained under his family until the days of Pagolo, his great-grandson.

Castruccio was, therefore, according to all that we have seen, a man unusual not only for his own day but also for past times. He was physically of above-average height, and every limb was in perfect proportion to the other; and he was so gracious in bearing and so human in his dealings with others that never did anyone who spoke with him leave dissatisfied. His hair was almost red, and he wore it cut above his ears; and always, at all times, even when it rained or snowed, he went about bareheaded.

He was gracious to his friends, terrible to his foes, just with his subjects, unfaithful to foreigners; if he could conquer by trickery, he never tried to win by force, for he said that it was the victory, not the method of achieving it, that brought one glory.

No one was ever more bold in risking danger, nor more reluctant to leave it. He used to say that men ought to try everything and fear nothing since God loved strong men and always punished the weak by means of the strong.

He was also amazing in conversation and full of witty remarks, sometimes sharp, sometimes urbane; and as he never minced words with others, he never became angry when others did the same with him. There are records of remarks he made as well as ones that were made to him.

When a friend reproved him for having bought a partridge for a ducat, Castruccio said: "You would not pay more than a penny for it." When his friend admitted that he was right, Castruccio replied: "A ducat is, for me, worth much less."

Once there was a flatterer in his presence. To show his contempt for the person, Castruccio spat upon him, whereupon the man said: "In order to catch a small fish

fishermen let themselves get entirely soaked by the sea; to land a whale I can well afford to let myself get wet from a little spit." Castruccio not only tolerated this reply but rewarded it.

Someone spoke ill of him, saying that he lived too well, to which Castruccio replied: "If this were a vice, there would not be such splendid banquets on the feast days of our saints."

Passing through a street and seeing a young man all red from blushing because he had been seen leaving a brothel, Castruccio said: "Don't be ashamed when you leave but when you enter."

When a friend gave him a carefully tied knot to loosen, he said: "Idiot, do you think I want to undo something that gives me so much trouble when it is tied?"

When Castruccio remarked to someone who was a professional philosopher, "You are like dogs that always stay around whoever feeds them best," the other replied: "On the contrary, we are like doctors who go to the houses of those who need us most."

Traveling from Pisa to Livorno by sea and being overtaken by a dangerous storm that frightened him very much, he was reproved for his fear by one of his companions, who claimed that he never feared anything; to this Castruccio answered that he was not surprised, since each man values his life as much as it is worth.

Asked by someone what he had to do to be respected, Castruccio said: "When you go to a banquet, don't be like a bump on a log."

When someone bragged about having read many things, Castruccio remarked: "It would be better to boast of having remembered many of them."

When somebody boasted of drinking a great deal without becoming intoxicated, he said: "An ox does exactly the same thing."

Castruccio once had a young girl with whom he lived; he was criticized for this by a friend, who said that it was

especially bad that he had let himself be taken by a woman. To this Castruccio retorted: "You are mistaken. I took her, not she me!"

When another person accused him of eating overly delicate foods, he said: "You would not spend as much as I do for them." And when the man admitted that this was correct, he added: "Therefore, you are a bigger miser than I am a glutton."

Once he was invited to supper at the home of Taddo Bernardi of Lucca, a very rich and extravagant man. When he arrived at the house, Taddo showed him a room completely decorated with tapestries and with a floor made of precious stones of various colors arranged in the shape of flowers, branches, and various plants. After having collected a good deal of saliva in his mouth, Castruccio spat it all into Taddo's face. When the man complained, Castruccio explained: "I wanted to spit in a place that would offend you the least."

Asked how Julius Caesar died, he remarked: "May God grant that I die the same way."

One night, at the house of one of his noblemen, where a number of women had been invited to make merry, he was dancing and enjoying himself more than was fitting to his station; rebuked for this by a friend, he remarked: "Anyone who is thought to be wise by day will never be considered a fool by night."

Once, when a man had come to beg a favor of him, Castruccio pretended not to hear, and the man threw himself at his knees. When Castruccio criticized him for doing so, he retorted: "It is your fault, since your ears are in your feet." Whereupon Castruccio gave him double the favor he requested.

He used to say that the road to Hell was easy since you could get there downhill and with your eyes closed.

When someone once asked him a favor by using many superfluous words, Castruccio exclaimed: "The next time you want something of me, send someone else."

The same kind of man once bored him with a long

speech that finally concluded: "Perhaps I have tired you by too much talking." To this Castruccio replied: "Not at all. I haven't heard a word you said."

He used to say of a man who had been a beautiful boy and was now a handsome man that he had caused too much harm, for at first he used to take the husbands away from their wives and now he took the wives away from their husbands.

He asked an envious man who was laughing: "Are you laughing because you are doing well or because someone else is in trouble?"

While he was still under the guidance of Messer Francesco Guinigi, one of his friends said: "What must I give you for you to let me slap your face?" Castruccio replied: "A helmet."

Having executed a citizen of Lucca who had been one of the reasons for his greatness, and subsequently being told that it was wrong to kill one of his old friends, he replied that this was mistaken, since he had killed a new enemy.

Castruccio praised greatly those men who picked wives and then did not marry them, as well as those who wanted to go to sea but never went.

He said that he was always amazed at how men, when buying a vase of earthenware or of glass, always sounded it out to find out if it were good, yet when choosing a wife were content only to see her.

When a person asked him, as he was about to die, how he wished to be buried, he replied: "With my face downward, since I know that this country will turn upside down when I am gone."

Asked if he had ever considered becoming a monk to save his soul, he replied that he had not, since it seemed strange to him that Brother Lazarus should go to Heaven and Ugucione della Faggiuola to Hell.

Asked when one should eat to stay healthy, he answered: "If you are rich, when you are hungry; if you are poor, when you can."

Seeing one of his gentlemen being buttoned up by his servant, he remarked: "I hope to God he also spoon-feeds you."

Noticing that someone had written over his doorway in Latin letters "May God guard this house from the wicked," he quipped: "That means that the owner cannot go in there himself!"

Passing through a street where there was a small house with a huge door, he said: "That house is going to run away through that door."

When he had been informed that a foreigner had corrupted a young boy, he said: "He must be from Perugia."

Once, when he asked what town had a reputation for cheaters and charlatans, he was answered, "Lucca," since everyone there was naturally that way, except for Bonturo Dati.¹

When Castruccio was arguing with an ambassador of the King of Naples about the property of exiles, he became rather angry. The ambassador said to him: "So you don't fear the king?" Castruccio replied: "Is he good or evil, this king of yours?" Hearing that he was good, Castruccio replied to the ambassador: "Then why should you want me to be afraid of a good man?"

I could recount many other things, all of which reflect his wit and his seriousness, but let these sayings suffice as proof of his great qualities.

He lived forty-four years, and he was like a prince no matter what Fortune dealt him. And as there were many evidences of his good luck, he also wished there to be some tokens of his bad fortune. Because of this, the handcuffs with which he was chained in prison can still be seen in the tower of his home, where he himself placed them in order that they might always testify to his adversity. And

¹ Here Machiavelli refers to the gibe at Lucca's reputation for barratry he had read about in Dante's *Inferno*, XXI, 41. Bonturo Dati was apparently the most corrupt official in Lucca at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

because he was, when living, inferior neither to Philip of Macedonia, Alexander's father, nor to Scipio of Rome, he died at the same age as both of them; and without a doubt he would have surpassed the one and the other if instead of Lucca he had had Macedonia or Rome for his native land.